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SUBJECT: COPENHAGEN READOUT: COLOMBIA LOOKS TO CONSOLIDATE LEADERSHIP
ROLE

REF: 09 BOGOTA 3303; 09 BOGOTA 3511; 09 BOGOTA 3489

¶1. (SBU) Summary. Environment Minister Carlos Costa discussed the results of the Copenhagen summit with EconCouns and ESTH officer on January 6. Costa noted the difficult nature of the negotiations, faulting the Bolivarian Alliance for the Americas (ALBA) countries and Sudan for blocking progress. He raised the importance of coming up with a "Plan B" for talks in Mexico City in December if an agreement cannot be reached with those countries, which could entail dropping them from the agreement. He also stressed that it is important to show results from Copenhagen in the form of solid financial commitments before Mexico in order for the process to gain credibility. In preparation for the Mexico City talks, Costa said Colombia plans to strengthen the "Like-Minded Latins" group and look for more allies within the G-77. Costa reiterated his invitation to the U.S. negotiating team to visit Colombia to become familiar with forestry issues here. End Summary.

U.S. IMAGE IMPROVED AT COPENHAGEN

¶2. (SBU) Environment Minister Costa credited President Obama and Secretary Clinton with changing the perception of the U.S. as a country unwilling to take steps against climate change, saying that he felt the U.S. image was bolstered by their actions at Copenhagen. Costa also mentioned China's massive public relations campaign, noting the Chinese Ambassador to Colombia visited his office the day after Copenhagen ended to defend its position.

OBSTRUCTIVE COUNTRIES SPOILED CHANCES FOR AN AGREEMENT

13. (SBU) Costa was critical of several countries' actions at Copenhagen, including Brazil for only defending its own interests during the talks. He charged that Brazil was complacent and unproductive during the talks as it already had a deforestation deal with Norway. He expressed no surprise at the uncooperativeness of ALBA countries and Sudan, whose "ridiculous rhetoric" comparing the results of the conference to genocide brought down the level of discourse. Costa highlighted the difference between the views of the leadership of the G-77 and the actual position of many countries within the group. He suggested there be a Plan B for the next summit that could exclude those obstructionist countries if necessary.

ADMINISTRATIVE PROBLEMS HINDERED PROCESS AT COPENHAGEN

14. (SBU) Costa was critical of the Danish hosts, explaining
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that their credibility was damaged by the perception that they were autocratic, inflexible and non-transparent. He also believed the Presidency and Secretary of the COP were weak and relied too much on the chairs of working groups to achieve consensus. Costa noted that after the heads of state arrived, the general perception amongst countries not included in the final leaders' meeting was that the conference lacked transparency.

FUTURE STEPS FOR COLOMBIA

15. (SBU) Costa noted there is a plurality of views within the G-77 and said he hoped to strengthen Colombia's position within the group by cultivating more like-minded allies. He also hopes to have several meetings of the "Like-Minded Latins" group to consolidate its position before the next climate change conference in Mexico City in December. Costa was pleased that Colombia -- a middle income country that is not an island and is a low emitter of carbon -- was selected to represent this group of countries. Costa was also pleased that Colombia was included in the pre-COP and the final small group negotiations at the end of the talks.

16. (SBU) Costa believes it will be important to produce concrete results before the Mexico City summit in order to bring credibility to the process, including disbursement of financial commitments. Costa was pleased at the creation of a deforestation fund of USD 3.5 million and suggested Colombia host a pilot program, stating that money invested in Colombia's forestry programs "would not be money wasted". He reiterated his invitation to the U.S. climate negotiators to visit Colombia to see first-hand Colombia's forestry programs and the challenges they face.

17. (SBU) Comment: Colombia seeks to continue its leadership role on climate change matters in the region and within the G-77. While the GOC wanted a stronger agreement at Copenhagen (see reftels), it sees the accord as a step forward. Colombia is a strong ally on climate change and we should continue to deepen our engagement with Colombia to advance our common goals at the Mexico City talks. End Comment.
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